**August 28, 2014**

**Africa RISING monthly meeting minutes for August 2014**

**Venue-**Sof-Omor meeting room

**Time-** 2:00PM-3:20 PM

**Participants;** Peter Thorne(ILRI), (Skype) , Eluid Birachi, (CIAT-Kenya) (skype) Aster G.Kirstos (ICRAF)(skype), Kindu Mekonnen (ILRI), Valentine Gandhi(IWMI), Kalpana Sharma (CIP), Melkamu Bezabih(ILRI), Nigussie (ICARDA), Elias Damtew(ILRI), Annet Mulema(ILRI), Wellington Jogo (CIP), Tadesse Gashaw (ICRISAT), Biyensa Gurmessa (CIAT), Dirk Hoekstra(LIVES), Kiros Hadgo (ICRAF), Britta Kowalski (CIP), Alan Duncan (ILRI), Aberra Adie (ILRI), Frederic Baudron(CIMMYT), Lulseged Desta (CIAT), Jane Wamatu (ICARDA)

**Agendas**

1. Progress update
2. Gender integration in Africa RISING research protocols and other activities
3. Fertilizer related new project initiative
4. Operational budget management
5. Next plan
6. AOB
7. **Progress update**

**CIP** “Meher” season planting went well at all sites. Data collection is in progress and field level data analysis will be following

**ICRAF**Apple in Debre Birhan and Avocado in Lemo have been planted and the establishment so far is satisfactory. The research activities are being handled in collaboration with national partners including MSc and PhD students. The partnership has already taken ground In Tigray and will soon start in Bale. The Apple varieties were purchased from Chencha for control experiments. There are also controlled experimental plots at Holeta in collaboration with Holeta Research Center.

**ICRISAT-** A new research officer (Tadesse Gashaw) has been employed in ICRISAT and is a member of the AR team representing ICRISAT. He reported that 20-25 farmers at each of the AR sites are participating in the fertilizers on-farm experiment on wheat. Side dressing of the fertilizers have taken place in Basona and Lemo, currently being dressed at Sinana and next week in Endamehoni.

Homestead gardening protocol is going to be implemented and nutrient analysis is going to be done at Lemo.

**CIMMYT:** Faba bean disease outbreak has been reported and Potatoes is doing well at Basona . Wheat performance is reported to be good so far in Sinana, Endamehoni and Basona.

Field days are planned for the sites.

Mechanization of irrigation activities willbe done in collaboration with IWMI.

**IWMI-** Irrigation options/technologies for irrigated fodder, High value crops and SWC experiments are being developed in consultation with two consultants who have started pilot studies in Basona and Lemo. Further integration of their work with similar work in other CG centers within the AR team is intended to be done soon. Motor pump distribution will be carried out with CIMMYT for farmers who are part of the CIMMYT-led trial. Valentine Gandhi from IWMI also jointly facilitated the recent gender workshop which was organized by Annet Mulema.

**ICARDA:** Dr. Nigussie has been assigned as AR focal person replacing Dr. Seid who has recently moved to Morocco. He reported that planting of PVS trials has been done in Illu Sanbitu about a month ago, currently being planted in Salka. They remain with Faba bean planting for community based seed multiplication trial.

**ILRI-** Gender workshop organized by Annet Mulema (ILRI) and co-facilitated Valentine Gandhi (IWMI) and Kathy Colverson (ILRI-Livestock & Fish) went well. 19 women and 23 men from the four AR sites and other stakeholders participated in the workshop. The workshop was very participatory and everybody including media staff participated warmly in the discussions. Two gender champions per site were voluntarily assigned to follow up the appropriate gender representation in the IP and research activities at site level. Participants were given a tool to train local partners. Some protocols where the gender element is currently strongly included are Tree Lucerne, Irrigated fodder, Ensete and Faba bean/forage trial.

Recruitment of Assistant site coordinators for each of the AR sites has been completed. Half of the duties of the assistant coordinators will be IP facilitation at local level.

Baseline tools for Tree Lucerne and Faba bean/forage trials have been developed in collaboration with concerned CG and local centers.

Concept note for USAID-ATA fertilizer related project has been developed. This has been done due to the request from USAID and envisaging potential synergies with AR research protocols. It was suggested in the discussion that this initiative is similarto what the government is already doing with the blending of fertilizers at local level. In fact the new intiative aims to complement existing activities by considering the system from wider perspectives (including that of the value chain) and it is an opportunity to build it in to AR’s R4D projects.

USAID provided favorable feedback to the progress report of AR activities. One comment which requires action is in the area of public relations and publicity. Digital stories and similar tools have to be used to document and publicize the project’s processes and output/outcomes to the wider community. This needs to be further discussed in September meeting.

**CIAT-** Value Chain Assessment report is nearly completed and will be shared soon. Validation will be done after training is given to IP members on validation work. It is planned to conduct site specific interactions with IP members at each site in September. It has been noted that the VCA work in itself doesn’t help much unless it is linked to interventions on ground. Potential interventions links could be with crops seed supply system, butter processing (Annet likes to contribute on the gender aspect and Melkamu on the technical aspect), fattening and dairy cafe and concentrate feed supply.

Automatic weather stations have been installed in two Woredas (Basona and Lemo) of the AR sites. Installation in the remaining sites is in progress. The weather stations are meant to be used for modelling of CIAT-led AR experiments but the data can be used by all of the researchers who have interest. Aster reported that ICRAF will install more automatic weather stations at Holeta, Gurage, Kosober, Agereselam and other sites for similar purpose (thought these are different from AR plan/budget). It is reminded that the National Meteorological Services Agency has to be notified and get access to the data if they want.

CIAT has opened its office in ILRI-Addis compound and employed staff to be based in Addis. This is hoped to facilitate stronger linkages with CG partners here in Addis.

Collection of data on yield gap trial has already been started.

1. **Crosscutting issues:**

**2.1. Synergies among CG centers in implementing AR research**

It was mentioned the need for practical synergies among CG centers especially at ground level where the R4D activities are taking place. The nature of some protocols being single discipline (due to differences in importance of the researchable items: example - Insosilla in Tigray and Ensete in Lemo) may be a challenge but for most of the protocols it is believed that it is possible to create synergies at site level and value chain level so that at the end of the day we deliver a synthesized package especially for scaling out of the best practices.

**2.2.** **Data management and sharing**

This issue has been noted as being important and will further be discussed during November meeting.

**2.3. Operation Budget utilization**

It has been reminded again that centers should not double-charge AR for the same activities for which they have been funded. They shouldn’t at the same time put pressure on site coordinators who have limited fund for the specific activities they have been assigned.

1. **Next Steps**
   * + 1. There will be IP training workshop for site level IP members on September 4-6
       2. Research protocols and progress so far to be discussed in the upcoming IP meetings in the respective sites

AR planning meeting to be held on the first week of December, 2014 in Addis.

Aberra Adie

August 28/2014